

WH/RNM/MARCHLET

30 March 2011

Dear Parent/Carer

Over the last half term we welcomed back the skiers who had been in Austria, led by Mr. Pratt and four other colleagues. I am very grateful to the staff who gave up their holiday to make this opportunity happen, and very proud of the young people involved, they were a credit to us and had a brilliant time.

During the same period Mr. Boulton took the Art and the Photography students to Paris, where they visited many famous and inspirational galleries. The sights included The Louvre, Musee d'Orsay, L'Orangerie and a nerve-jangling journey to the top of the Eiffel Tower. The trip provided creative source material for the forthcoming exams and our Summer Exhibition, and as always, our talented artists and photographers proved worthy and responsible ambassadors of our school.

I was privileged to attend our recent production performance of "Return to the Forbidden Planet". I am in awe of all involved with the performance. Every year Mrs Knill and her team produce magic with our young people, and this was no exception, there was so much to praise, and so many involved – a truly remarkable event. I continue to be astounded at the way these young people are brought together to create such a quality show.

The whole school community, including the statue, joined together to mark the 100th International Women's' Day. Supported by two Governors, Mrs Heron and Mrs Franks, we celebrated the achievements of nearly one hundred great female role models. As a part of this celebration we were honoured to have Mike Tomlinson attend school to talk to some Year 7s' about his late wife, Jane. He described where she found that incredible drive for achievement; it was a touching, personal and challenging meeting.

The statue also marked St. Patrick's Day, and joined in our community celebrations for Comic Relief, on each occasion being dressed appropriately. Our plan for the statue to celebrate England's participation in the Cricket World Cup Final has been thwarted by Sri Lanka.

Our School Improvement Partner, Mr Ken Tonge visited our school earlier in March to evaluate our Inclusion Team; he assessed their work against OFSTED guidelines; it is a great credit to Miss Cathcart and her colleagues that we came away with an 'Outstanding' judgment. It was also good to welcome our Ward Councillor, Allan Lamb into school to share our inclusive practice; it was great for him to have the opportunity to interact with our young people.

Last week we welcomed back our young people from the French exchange at the Collège George Sand in the Champagne region of France. They had a great time, and were brilliantly led by Miss Venires and Miss Hibbert; thank you to the parents who took the time to send in some lovely letters expressing appreciation for the trip.

We were pleased to welcome Craig Heap, the Olympic Gymnast, back to school. Craig's first involvement in school was when he joined us to be part of the unveiling of the statue in January. This week he came to talk to Year 11, showing them how to apply the lessons he learnt about becoming a world class athlete to their GCSE studies. As ever Craig was inspirational!

Congratulations are due to four individuals, Charlotte Murray (Yr10) who has been selected for the U15 West Yorkshire Hockey team. Luke Broadbent (Yr11) has competed through the whole of the cross country season, and has ended the year as the individual winner of the Leeds Cross Country League. Davey McElwee (Yr8) won the individual title at the Leeds Schools Climbing Competition, our first success in this event. Fiona Berry (Yr13) has been selected for the North of England senior football squad. These are fantastic achievements for them all.

Congratulations are also due to our senior footballers, coached by Mr Swales, who won the final of the West Yorkshire County Cup this month, beating Temple Moor 4-2. This is our first ever success in this competition. The team are a real credit to the school, not just for their success, but also for the spirit in which they play the game.

As parents will know, we will introduce a House system for September, and held interviews last week for the role of House Leader. We are delighted to promote Mr. Potter, Mr. Lynskey, Miss Hibbert and Mr. Brennan to these roles.

We are consulting on the names for the four new houses, so if parents and carers have any good ideas we would be glad to hear from you, emailing info@bostonspa.leeds.sch.uk marked for the attention of Mr. Martin.

Mrs Kath Carline has stood down from her role as a Parent Governor after many years of selfless service. We are very grateful for all that she has brought to our school in this time. I will arrange an election after the Easter break.

Miss Taylor led a group of young engineers to the regional finals of the Toyota Challenge. We were really pleased to break through to this stage of the competition, but delighted when the Boston Spa School solar powered car won third place. It is a great achievement by George Fairbrother, Theodore Clayton, James McMullen and Chirag Patel, congratulations to all involved.

On Thursday Mr Bolton started the 'Argumental' debating club, with young people from Years 11 to 17 debating the legal age for alcohol consumption, whether Facebook makes people unsociable and whether video games cause bad behaviour. I am sure this will become an increasingly popular group as the weeks go by!

For the last month Miss Pitt has been leading 'Maths Mentoring'. Each Tuesday, forty confident Year 9 mathematicians are working with individual Year 7s in a range of activities which are designed to improve both the mentees' basic Maths skills as well as their self-confidence.

We are looking forward to repeating our successful 'Celebrating Our Community' event early next term. We have also launched a consultation on our new Equalities Policy with both parents and students. If you would like to be involved in either of these please contact Miss Cathcart through the school switchboard.

We wish every success to our 'Spelling Bee Team' who are off to Bradford Cineworld to represent our school on the 31st March with Miss Carter. We are represented by Kieran Halliday, Warren White, Jayden Boyes and Govindas Roth. They have modestly dubbed themselves the 'Boston Spa Stingers', and we look forward to hearing of their success.

There are lots of opportunities in our school, and we are very privileged to have a school community with such a talented and committed staff, but also so many brilliant young people who grasp these opportunities so well. We are delighted to see so many of these young people choosing to return to Boston Spa School Sixth Form. Our Contextualised Value Added (CVA) for the Sixth Form in 2011 is 1015, which indicates that young people at Boston Spa School are achieving at a level significantly above expectation at 18 years old. This is reflected in the huge number of young people, over 120, who secured places at Universities including both Oxford and Cambridge. It was therefore a particular pleasure this week to welcome back to Boston Spa School three of our ex-students, currently at Oxford and Cambridge Universities, who are now working for their respective Universities in encouraging and coaching young people through the 'Oxbridge' application process. I very much hope that some of our Year 11 and 12s will be the beneficiaries of this programme through the next few months.

Friday 1st April is a training day. The day will be given over to staff moderating examination course work or updating Child Protection training. School re-opens on Monday 18th April 2011. There are many broken weeks through April due to the unusual bank holiday arrangements for Easter and a Royal Wedding. Every day in school counts at this stage, so although one school week is only three days, we should not compromise on achieving 100% attendance as the exams come ever closer. It is really important that our young people from Years 9 to 13 use the time out of school effectively to make sure that they achieve their potential in the May exams. If you would like advice about how to support your daughter or son through these broken weeks please do not hesitate to ring the appropriate Year Office. We are only too pleased to work with you.

I trust that you and yours have a safe and happy school holiday

Yours faithfully

CHRISTOPHER WALSH
Headteacher